

APPLICATION FOR PATENT

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TITLE: GOLF CLUB HEAD

SPECIFICATION

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of a previously filed application having a Serial No. of 09/450,299 which is a continuation of Serial No. 08/926,328, filed September 5, 1997, which is a continuation of Serial No. 259,624 filed June 14, 1994; which is a continuation of Serial No. 937,178 filed August 31, 1992; which is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 897,005 filed June 11, 1992; which is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 806,348 filed December 13, 1991; which is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 549,973 filed July 9, 1990, now U.S. patent number 5,094,383, which is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 492,973, filed March 13, 1990, now U.S. Patent 5,024,437, issued June 18, 1991; which his a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 364,698, filed June 12, 1989, now abandoned. All of such applications and resulting patents are hereby incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENTS REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0004] This invention relates to golf clubs and more particularly to an improved face plate construction for a golf club head.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] The heads of golf clubs are generally formed in a one piece casting of durable materials such as stainless steel, beryllium copper, aluminum, etc. A head of this type is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,021,047 issued May 3rd, 1977 to R.J. Mader. The use of face plates made of a different material than that of the main body of the club head has been used in the prior art in both irons and "wood" type drivers which are often made of cast metal. Such prior art club heads are described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,792,140 issued Dec 20, 1988 to Yamaguchi, et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 4,534,558 issued Aug. 13, 1985 to Yoneyama; U.S. Pat. No. 3,218,072 issued Nov. 16, 1965 to Burr; and British patent no. 1.227.948 issued Apr. 15, 1971 to Haines, et al. In the heads of all of these prior art patents, the face plate is of a plastic material such as a resin or a carbon fiber composite. It has been found that the use of a forged metal for the face plate of the club head results in a more solid impact and feel which provides better control. However, forged metal is not amenable to casting which mitigates against its use for forming the entire head. Also forged metal tends to have a high density which would make for a club head having excessive weight.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The golf club head of the present invention provides an improvement over prior art heads in that it utilizes a face plate of forged metal. This end result is achieved without greatly increasing the cost or weight of the driving head by forming the main body of the head in an investment casting of a material such as stainless steel, beryllium copper, titanium, or aluminum and then attaching a face plate of a forged metal selected from the class consisting of forged carbon steel, forged stainless steel, forged beryllium copper, and forged titanium by suitable means such as welding.

[0007] It has been found that forged metal face plates have an inherently greater strength than cast metal face plates with a more uniform hardness over the hitting area of the plate. This is in view of the low porosity, high density and homogeneous grain structure of such a material which makes for a more solid plate. On the other hand, cast metal is desirable for the main body of the club head in view of its lighter weight which tends to keep down the overall weight of the club head. It is essential that the face plate be solidly attached to the main body of the head by means such as welding to make for a solidly integrated head structure.

[0008] It is therefore an object of this invention to provide a golf club head having a face plate of a forged metal which gives solider impact and feel to provide better control;

[0009] Other objects of the invention will become apparent as the description proceeds in connection with the accompanying drawings of which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010]

Figure 1 is a side elevational view of a first embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 is a bottom plan view of the first embodiment;

Figure 3 is a top plan view illustrating the face plate employed in the first embodiment;

Figure 4 is a top plan view of the first embodiment;

Figure 5 is a side elevational view of a second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 6 is a bottom plan view of the second embodiment;

Figure 7 is a front perspective view of the second embodiment;

Figures 8–10 are sections taken in elevation to show plate and head attachment; and

Figure 11 is an enlarged section showing welding and finishing.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] Referring to Figures 1–4, a first embodiment of the invention is illustrated. Face plate 11, which is fabricated of a material selected from the class consisting of forged carbon steel, forged stainless steel, forged beryllium copper, and forged titanium, has a lip portion 11a formed thereon. The main body 12 of the club head is formed by the investment casting of a material, such as stainless steel, beryllium copper, titanium, aluminum, etc. Main body portion 12 has a slot 12a formed therein and a recessed portion 12b which matingly receives face plate 11 with lip portion 11a fitting into slot 12a. Face plate 11 is solidly integrated with main body portion 12 by weld joints 14 formed along the perimeter of the face plate. In this manner, the face plate is solidly integrated with the casting.

[0012] Referring now to Figures 5–7, a second embodiment of the invention is illustrated, this embodiment being a “wood”-type driver. The main body portion 12, as for the previous embodiment, is formed by investment casting from a material such as stainless steel,

beryllium copper, titanium, aluminum, etc. The face plate 11, as for the previous embodiment, is fabricated of forged metal selected from the same class of materials as for the first embodiment. The face plate 11 is abutted against the front surface of the casting and solidly joined thereto along weld joints 14, which run along the perimeter of the face plate thereby integrating the face plate with the casting.

[0013] For best results, both the head and the face plate consist of the same high strength material, i.e., stainless steel. One such steel is 17-4 PH forged stainless steel. This facilitates best weld connection of these parts and resistance to separation upon repeated sharp impacts with golf balls. See in this regard Figures 8-11, showing connection of these parts.

[0014] In Figure 8, the peripheral slot 12b is shown formed in a thickened portion 12c of the cast stainless steel head which projects forwardly. See arrow 15. The slot and thickened portion 12c extend in a loop about the open end of the head, which is hollow at 16. Thickness "t" of the main wall extent of the head, rearward of 12c, is typically within the range 0.50 and 0.070 inches, except that the sole plate is typically between 0.085 and 0.100 inches. Head looping lip 12d overhangs the slot 12b, which is generally L-shaped in cross section. See Figure 11.

[0015] Figure 9 shows the forged stainless steel plate 11 looping periphery 11a closely fitted into the looping slot 12b; and Figure 11 also shows this as well as the plate wall 11b abutting the looping ledge 12e which constitutes one wall of the slot.

[0016] Figure 11 also shows weld material 14 applied to the elements 12d and 11a, and penetrating the clearance between 11a and 12d. After grinding, as along finish line 17, the looping peripheral edge of the head and plate is forwardly convexly rounded, as at 20 in Figure 10, some weld material remaining, as in the clearance. A high strength, rigid connection is thereby effected between the high strength, compatible stainless steel elements 11 and 12, with element 11 being forged for extremely high strength and resistance to failure as by crack formation, and resistance to deformation, in use.

[0017] Forged plate 11 is preferably of uniform thickness, within the range 0.090 and 0.130 inches, and is thicker than sole plate 13.

[0018] The method of forming the high strength head includes the steps:

[0019] a) casting a golf club head main body consisting of metal,

[0020] b) forging a golf club head face plate consisting of metal,

[0021] c) weld connecting the forged face plate to the front of the head main body to conform to the front periphery of the body.

[0022] Further, the a) step typically includes forming a lip 12*d* at the periphery of the head main body, and the c) step includes weld connecting the periphery 11*a* of the forged face plate to the lip 12*d*; and including grinding the weld, the lip and the plate periphery to form a forwardly convex and smooth head surface bounding the periphery of the plate.

[0023] While the invention has been described and illustrated in detail, it is to be clearly understood this is intended by way of illustration and example only and is not to be taken by way of limitation, the spirit and scope of the invention being limited only by the terms of the following claims.